

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 737

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2566

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJ: MAULANA'S MARCH ENDS WITHOUT INCIDENT

1. MAULANA BHASHANI'S "LONG MARCH" ENDED WITHOUT INCIDENT
YESTERDAY AFTERNOON (MAY 17) AT NISHAT, A VILLAGE SOME
SIX MILES FROM THE BORDER. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS,
BHASHANI IN A 45-MINUTE SPEECH CONCLUDING THE MARCH
SAID THAT IF INDIA DID NOT RESOLVE THE FARAKKA PROBLEM
BY AUGUST 16, HE WOULD BOYCOTT INDIAN GOODS AND URGE
THE ENTIRE WORLD, PARTICULARLY MUSLIM COUNTRIES, TO
JOIN THE BOYCOTT. IF THE FARAKKA ISSUE WAS NOT SETTLED,
THE MAULANA WARNED, HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT THE NEXT
MARCH HE WOULD LEAD WOULD STAY WITHIN BANGLADESH TERRITORY.

2. RHETORICALLY, THE MAULANA WAS IN A GOOD OF MILITANT
RIGHTEOUSNESS, CALLING DOWN DIVINE WRATH UPON MRS. GANDHI.
ACCORDING TO THE BANGLADESH TIMES, THE MAULANA SAID THAT
THE GANGA IS "THE GIFT OF ALLAH ALMIGHTY AND IF YOU,
MRS. GANDHI DO NOT GIVE US OUR DUE SHARE OF IT, ALLAH'S
CURSE WILL BEFALL YOU." IF THE "GREAT NEIGHBOR" TRIES TO
BROWBEAT THE EIGHT CRORE BANGLADESHIS, IT WILL BRING
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DOWN UPON ITSELF "THE BEGINNING OF DOOM." AS HE HAS IN

THE PAST, THE MAULANA CALLED FOR A JIHAD (HOLY WAR) IF THE COUNTRY WAS ATTACKED BY ANYONE. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, HE APPEALED FOR AN ECUMENICAL HOLY WAR, SAYING THAT HE WAS SURE BANGLADESHIS OF ALL RELIGIOUS AND CLASSES WOULD DEFEND THEIR MOTHERLAND. THE MAULANA TEMPERED HIS THREATS WITH THE STATEMENT THAT FRATERNAL NEIGHBORLINESS IS THE GREATEST DESIRE OF THE BANGLADESHIS AND THAT FARAKKA COMPLICATED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO PEOPLES WHO HAVE FOUGHT "NECK TO NECK" AGAINST EXPLOITATION BY IMPERIALISTS AND COLONIALISTS.

3. COMMENT: THE MARCH, WHICH ENDED QUIETLY, HAS LEFT ITS SUPPORTERS WITH A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. THEY ASSERT THAT THE "LONG MARCH" HAS DONE MUCH TO UNIFY BANGLADESHIS, COMPELLING THEM TO RECOGNIZE THEIR COMMON DESTINY. MOREOVER, THEY BELIEVE THAT IT HAS HELPED TO MOBILIZE WORLD OPINION, AND TO FOCUS IT UPON BANGLADESH'S PLIGHT; THE FACT THAT THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN ISTANBUL EXPRESSED "DEEP CONCERN" OVER THE FARAKK ISSUE (ISTANBUL 1851) IS SEEN IN PART AS EVIDENCE OF THIS. THERE IS, OF COURSE, A DISQUIETING ASPECT TO THE "LONG MARCH". IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE ADDITIONAL FOREIGN SECRETARY TODAY (MAY 18), THE DCM AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR WERE TOLD THAT THE BANGLADESH CASE HAD BEEN HELPED MATERIALLY BY INDIA'S OVERREACTION WHICH INCLUDED A STRONG DEMARCHE TO THE BDG'S HIGH COMMISSIONER IN DELHI AND SHRILL NEWS COVERAGE AS WELL AS ITS DECISION TO REINFORCE ITS BORDER SECURITY FORCE IN THE VICINITY OF THE MARCH'S END AND TO PLACE ADDED GUARDS ON THE FARAKKA BARRAGE ITSELF. THE NOTE OF PLEASURE IN THE VOICE OF THE AFS AS HE MADE HIS REMARKS SUGGESTS AS MUCH INTEREST IN SCORING POINTS AGAINST INAGDIA AS IN SETTLING THE FARAKK ISSUE.

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